



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
**OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**  
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 322  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

April 12, 2019

To: The Honorable Senator Brain T. Taniguchi, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Les Ihara Jr., Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

From: Aphirak Bamrungruan, Executive Director

Subject: **HCR 113, HD1** – Requesting the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to  
convene the multiple languages emergency notification working group.

Hearing: Tuesday, April 16, 2019, 2:05 PM  
Conference Room 423, State Capitol

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**Agency's Position:** The Office of Language Access (OLA) supports the intent of the House Concurrent Resolution 113, HD1.

**Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this resolution is to request the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to convene the multiple languages emergency notification working group.

The agency notes that the aspirational and exploratory goal of this resolution are in line with the mission of OLA which is to address the language access needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons and ensure their meaningful access to services, programs, and activities offered by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government, including departments, offices, commissions, boards, and other state-funded agencies.

The lack of English proficiency has strong impacts on people's economic and social activities, safety, health literacy and wellness, access to education, employment, and important public assistance, benefits, programs and services. Languages barriers are known to be an important contributor to the ineffectiveness of emergency information dissemination and related problems, especially in multicultural communities.

As the recent events demonstrate, disaster/emergency can strike our state anywhere, anytime, and often without warning. With so many of Hawaii's residents and visitors speaking a language other than English at home, it is critical that all our communities have access to service and information to help them prepare for and respond to emergencies.

The establishment of a working group is an important step toward information-sharing and the development of ideas and action steps to address the language needs during emergency events.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this resolution.



Testimony in support of HCR113 hd1  
Submitted by: Amy Agbayani, co-chair  
3432 B-1 Kalihi St.  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96819

Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara and members of the Committee

Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights (HFCR) strongly supports HCR 113 hd1 convening the multiple languages emergency notification working group. HFCR supports these resolutions because it is consistent with mandates and goals for equal access and inclusion of all persons in our state. Clearly individuals, both residents and visitors need to have equal access to communications particularly as it pertains to emergencies. The information on speakers of other languages who have limited English language abilities described in the resolution and other safety issues gives adequate and important reasons to convene this working group.

Mahalo for supporting language access for residents and visitors.



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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April 16, 2019

### TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, CUTURE AND THE ARTS

#### House Concurrent Resolution 113, HD1 – Convening the Multiple Languages Emergency Notification Working Group.

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) offers comments on House Concurrent Resolution 113, HD1 – Convening the Multiple Languages Emergency Notification Working Group. This resolution establishes a working group to develop emergency notifications about disasters to effectively notify all members in the community of an impending emergency. This is targeted primarily for people with limited English proficiency; however, there are people with disabilities who are deaf whose first language is American Sign Language, not English. It also impacts people with cognitive disabilities and traumatic brain injuries who understand plain language more clearly. Our comments address the needs of the population of people with disabilities.

Our office is named as one of the members of the working group to ensure that information is disseminated to the public in clear, understandable, and plain language. We are willing to serve as a member of this working group and to assist in identifying people with disabilities to participate as members. House Standing Committee Report 1757 indicated, per our recommendation, that the State Council on Developmental Disabilities would be included as a member of the committee along with a suggestion from the Office of Language Access that the Interagency Council for Refugee and Immigrant Service. However these agencies were not added to the list of members in House Draft 1. We recommend that they be listed as members in a Senate Draft 1.

We encourage you to include people with disabilities and immigrants on the working group, not only government representatives. There should not be any planning for people with disabilities or immigrants without them being part of the process from the onset.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

Respectfully submitted,

FRANCINE WAI  
Executive Director

**LATE**

**HCR-113-HD-1**

Submitted on: 4/16/2019 11:59:27 AM

Testimony for LCA on 4/16/2019 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melodie Aduja	Testifying for O`ahu County Democrats Legislative Priorities Committee	Support	No

Comments:

To the Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, the Honorable Les Ihara, Jr., and members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts:

The O`ahu County Democrats Legislative Priorities Committee submits its testimony in support of HCR 113, HD1, as one in four residents in Hawai`i speak a language other than English at home, and about one in eight Hawaii residents speak English “less than very well”, making Hawaii one of the highest rates of persons with limited English proficiency, per capita, in the United States. As such, convening a working group of stakeholders would be a significant step toward sharing information, developing ideas, and taking action to ensure meaningful access for Hawaii’s residents and visitors with limited English proficiency through the provision of emergency notifications in multiple languages.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HCR113, HD1.

Mahalo nui loa.

Melodie Aduja

Chair, O`ahu County Democrats Legislative Priorities Committee